

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9384

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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SUBJECT: FOOD SITUATION IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA, SEPT 26-27, 1976

1. EMBOFF AND BRITISH EMBOFF VISITED CENTRAL MARKET (KOM'YAUNIMO STREET) IN VILNIUS AT ABOUT 10:30 SUNDAY MORNING (SEPT 26), BUT DID NOT COLLECT DETAILED PRICE INFORMATION SINCE THEY WERE WITH A LOCAL ACQUAINTANCE AND WERE BEING CONSPICUOUSLY SURVEILLED. MARKET WAS VERY CROWDED, WITH MOST CUSTOMERS IN THE FRUIT AND VEGATABLE AREA. THERE WAS ALSO BEEF AND PORK, BUT NO LAMB, AVAILABLE IN MORE-THAN-SUFFICIENT QUANTITY FOR THE CUSTOMERS IN THAT AREA. ABOUT HALF-A-DOZEN FRESH-KILLED CHICKENS WERE BEING OFFERED AT 6 - 8 RUBLES APIECE, BUT THERE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY CUSTOMERS.

2. EMBOFF RETURNED MONDAY (SEPT 27) AT ABOUT 9:30 A.M. WIHTOUT LOCAL COMPANION. MEAT PAVILION WAS CLOSED, THERE WERE FAR FEWER STALLS OPERATING, FAR FEWER CUSTOMERS. ONE STALL HAD AN ENORMOUS QUANTITY OF ONIONS AT 70 KOPEKS/KILO (THE ONLY STALL FOR WHICH THE PREVIOUS DAY'S LINE HAD EXCEEDED THREE OR FOUR PEOPLE. EMBOFF'S LOCAL COMPANION HAD SAID THAT SELLER WAS A KOREAN. ONLY ONE OR TWO OTHER STALLS WERE OFFERING SMALL QUANTITIES OF ONIONS. PLUMS WERE 20-60 KOPEKS/KILO, CARROTS 13-15

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KOPEKS/KILO, CUCUMBERS (ONLY AT SEVERAL STALLS) WERE 1

RUBLE/KILO AND RIPE TOMATOES 1.50 RUBLES/KILO. CABBAGE
WAS 8 KOPEKS FOR A LARGE HEAD. IN SHOPS ON ONE OF
MAIN STREETS (PROSPEKT LENINA) GREEN TOMATOES WERE 60
KOPEKS/KILO; APPLES, 60 KOPEKS/KILO; BEETS, 14 KOPEKS/K
KILO; EGGS, 95 KOPEKS FOR 10; LEMONS WERE SELLING FOR
35 KOPEKS APIECE; AND PEPPERS 40 KOPEKS PER 1/2 KILO.
ONLY TWO TYPES OF BREAD APPEARED TO BE AVAILABLE, LARGE
BROWN LOAVES AT 36 KOPEKS AND WHITE "BATONI" AT 20 KOPEKS.
BOTH TYPES WERE VERY TASTY.

3. BOTH LOCAL ACQUAINTANCES CONTACTED, AS WELL AS A
LITHUANIAN TAXI DRIVER, SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE FOOD SITUATION
IN LITHUANIA IS GOOD COMPARED WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE
USSR, IT HAS DETERIORATED A GREAT DEAL OVER THE PAST
THREE YEARS, ESPECIALLY THE MEAT SITUATION. ONE ACQUAINTANCE
REPORTED THE EXISTENCE OF A THRIVING, SEMI-UNDERGROUND
TRADE BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND POLAND, WITH LITHUANIANS PROVIDING
FOODSTUFFS TO POLISH VISITORS, WHO THEN SEND THEIR
LITHUANIAN CONTACTS PARCELS OF RELATIVELY STYLISH
POLISH CLOTHING. THIS ACQUAINTANCE, WHO IS NOT
LITHUANIAN, SAID THAT THE RELATIVELY GOOD ECONOMIC
SITUATION HAS, IN EFFECT, BOUGHT OFF MOST OF THE POPULATION;
MOST OF THOSE WHO ACTIVELY EXPRESS DISSATISFACTION WITH SOVIET RULE ARE TEENAGERS AND STUDENTS.
HOWEVER, THE AUTHORITIES ARE NOT SANGUINE AND TRY TO
KEEP WESTERN INFLUENCE TO A MINIMUM. FOR INSTANCE,
WHEN THE TAH EXHIBIT WAS IN MINSK, FACTORIES AND
ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ATTEMPTED TO HIRE BUSES FOR GROUP
OUTINGS FOR VILNIUS TO MINSK (ON OTHER PRETEXTS)
FOUND THIS IMPOSSIBLE, THE EXCUSE BEING THAT THERE WAS
AN EPIDEMIC OF GRIPPE IN MINSK.

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